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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0956
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SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN: EUSR VISIT DISCUSSION OF BLOGGERS,
N-K, AZ-RUSSIAN BORDER AND NORTH CAUCASUS

REF: BAKU 898

Classified By: Acting DCM T. Davidson, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: On November 18, the political advisor to Peter Semneby, EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the South Caucasus, briefed poloff on Semneby's recent trip to Baku and Yerevan that concluded November 16 and included meetings with both Presidents, the Azerbaijani FM and Russian Ambassador to Baku. Sargsian signaled to Semneby that he might further distance himself from previously agreed positions on the IDP issue when he meets Aliyev in Munich. For his part, Aliyev repeated his threats to cut off energy cooperation with Turkey. However, he did broach the possibility of an amnesty that would free imprisoned bloggers Milli and Hajizade. The Russian Ambassador told Semneby that Baku and Moscow had made a breakthrough on the final issue affecting border delimitation. Aliyev's recent meeting with Chechen President Kadyrov may signal increasing cooperation on clamping down on the movement of militants in the Caucasus, despite the latter's accusatory public posture. End Summary.

Light at the End of the Tunnel for Bloggers?

12. (C) Claire Delessard, political advisor to EUSR Semneby, briefed Poloff on Semneby's most recent travel to Baku and Yerevan, which concluded November 16. As reported Reftel, President Aliyev suggested that an amnesty may be in the offing that would free the imprisoned bloggers Emin Milli and Adnan Hajizade. However, the President expressed anger about the level of international criticism that the case had attracted.

N-K, Turkey-Armenia, Energy

13. (C) According to Delessard, Armenian President Sargsian signaled that Armenia's position will harden at the upcoming meeting of Presidents in Munich. Sargsian told Semneby that Azerbaijani IDPs could not be permitted to return to N-K until final status is determined, and questioned the need for a voting mechanism to determine it. In any case, Azerbaijani participation in a vote was not to be considered.

14. (C) Azerbaijani President Aliyev and Foreign Minister Mammadyarov did not offer much substance on N-K aside from

criticizing the Co-Chairs for not being "active" enough (NFI). The Russian Ambassador in Baku, Vladimir Dorokhin, told Semneby that the GOAJ complained to him that the Co-Chairs were too inclined to postpone discussion of the really contentious issues.

15. (C) Although Aliyev was nonspecific about the Minsk Group negotiations, he very openly said that the Turkey-Armenia process would undermine Turkey-Azerbaijan energy cooperation if it concluded without taking Baku's interests into account.

"It can never be like before," Aliyev said, remarking that he was beginning to consider much more seriously doing White Stream, maritime transport of compressed gas to Bulgaria, and sales to Russia and Iran. He was also bitterly dismissive of Turkmenistan, seeing little prospect for joining with that country in a westward export route.

16. (C) Delessard added that in separate meetings with foreign investors, two major companies (NFI) working on Shah Deniz told Semneby that they were planning to withdraw from the project if Turkey and Azerbaijan could not reach agreement on the Shah Deniz I pricing and Shah Deniz II volume and transit issues by the end of 2009.

Russian Border Delimitation

17. (C) Ambassador Dorokhin told Semneby that Moscow and Baku had made serious progress toward resolving the remaining obstacle to final delimitation of their common border, which is the allocation of water from the Samur river. The two sides, the Ambassador said, were about to agree on an equal access arrangement for the water resources. (Note: The Samur-Apsheronky Canal is the primary source of fresh water

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for the Absheron Peninsula and the city of Baku. The river is much more important to Azerbaijan than Russia, although 90 percent of its source waters are in Russia. End Note.)

North Caucasus

18. (C) Delessard told Poloff that Aliyev and Semneby also discussed the North Caucasus, and that Azerbaijan was even more concerned than before about the region because of security issues along the pipeline that will now carry the gas Azerbaijan agreed to sell to Russia. Aliyev's recent meeting with Chechen President Kadyrov (Note: Kadyrov visited Baku in November 6 during the festivities marking the 30th anniversary of the accession of Allahshakur Pashazade to the leadership of the Caucasus Muslim Board. End Note) focused on increasing cooperation to clamp down on the free movement of Islamic militants between Azerbaijan and the North Caucasus regions. Delessard said that Aliyev admitted that Azerbaijani passports had been found on about five percent of the fighters killed in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan in recent months. Aliyev reported a cordial and cooperative meeting with Kadyrov, which belied the latter's accusations from September 2009 of Azerbaijan's complicity in the supply of arms to terrorists.

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